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Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Dialogue paper by women*

* Prepared by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), invited by the Summit secretariat to be the organizing partner of the dialogue segment for women. The paper has been prepared in consultation with women's organizations worldwide facilitated by WEDO. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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> We women form a significant proportion of the workforce and sustain the majority of households and communities. We are consumers and producers, and make many relevant decisions. In every corner of the world, women are change agents. Women of all ages and backgrounds show commitment, knowledge and skills to build a more sustainable society.[1]

Introduction

1. Women, who make up half of the global population,[2] are key actors in building sustainable development. Juggling multiple responsibilities in the home, at the workplace, and in the community, women have a unique knowledge of sustainability and exert a critical influence on the lives of their families, communities and societies. However, persistent gender inequalities continue to leave women without an equal voice in the decision-making processes that impact their lives and their environment.

2. The present paper evaluates progress on gender and sustainable development since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro. It also examines women's priorities for the future as the preparatory process for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, gets under way. It should be noted that, although they are discussed as a major group in this paper, women live in many different contexts and situations and their position differs depending on region, social status and class, age, caste and educational background; but in every society, women as a group are disadvantaged as compared with men.

I. Gender concerns at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

3. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development[3] stated clearly: "Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development" (principle 20).

4. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was a groundbreaking conference, not only because of its agenda-setting on environment and development, but also because of its affirmation of women's critical contributions to environmental management and sustainable development. The outcomes were largely due to the extent of women's involvement in the preparatory process. Worldwide women organized national and regional forums which began to lobby to draw attention to women's concerns and priorities, and to stimulate a gender focus in the conference.

5. Prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, two major conferences of women's organizations had been convened in November 1991 in Miami. At the "Global Assembly on Women and the Environment: Partners in Life" organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WorldWIDE Network, Inc., case studies on women and development were presented. At the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, organized by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), more than 1,500 women from 83 countries came together to formulate and adopt Women's Action Agenda 21, a blueprint for a healthy and peaceful planet in the twenty-first century. Armed with this powerful tool, women successfully lobbied for sections on gender equality in the official documents of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21[4] and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

6. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development NGO Forum, daily panel discussions, workshops and informal meetings in the women's tent, *Planeta Femea*, were organized by the Brazilian women's organization Network for Human Development (REDEH). These combined efforts resulted not only in the drafting of principle 20 of the Rio Declaration, but also in the recognition of women as a major group in Agenda 21. Chapter 24 entitled "Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development", which consists of 11 different commitments, is policy and management-oriented and contains specific recommendations to strengthen the role of women in sustainable development and to eliminate obstacles to their equal and beneficial participation, particularly in decision-making. In Agenda 21, 145 other references are made to the necessary steps to be taken, from a gender perspective.

7. The commitments in Agenda 21 on strengthening the position of women and advancing gender equality are made in the following nine areas:

- Recognition of the role of women;
- Participation of women (and women's groups);
- Women's access to and control of resources;
- Women's poverty, education and work;
- Women's health and security;
- Women's organization and empowerment for sustainable development;
- Women's rights;
- Information;
- Institutional aspects.

II. Progress since Rio?

8. The present section evaluates progress in implementing gender-related commitments in Agenda 21 since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It is based on information from various sources — women's groups around the world, Governments and the United Nations — since no formal monitoring mechanisms are provided in Agenda 21.

9. Since 1992, gender has been an explicit part of many key United Nations conferences, specifically: the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994);[5] the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995); the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul, 1996); the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996); and the five-year reviews: the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development; the twenty-third special session of the Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"; and the twenty-fourth special session of the Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

10. Significant among these was the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, where the final document, the Platform for Action,[6] augmented the shift from a women-specific approach to a focus on gender relations. Six areas were identified in which action was needed: mainstreaming a gender perspective in sustainable development; participation of women in decision-making for sustainable development; strengthening women's capabilities; involving civil society; gender analysis and research; and empowering women economically. The strategies highlighted were gender mainstreaming, a life-cycle approach, partnerships between women and men, a human rights approach, and a holistic approach towards development.[7] The following assessment mirrors the commitment categories in Agenda 21, as listed in the introduction above.

A. Recognition of the role of women

11. Critical area K of the Beijing Platform for Action, "Women and the environment", asserts that "human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development", and that "women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management" (para. 246).

12. Since women are primarily responsible for sustaining the livelihood of their families, they play a critical role in managing the diversity of the ecosystem. In many regions around the world, women are responsible for producing the bulk of domestic food. In Africa alone, this figure is as high as 70-80 per cent. Worldwide, they make up 51 per cent of the agricultural labour force. In most societies in Africa, Latin America and Asia, the care of seeds has traditionally been in the hands of women. Women are also responsible for household consumption. This is true not only in day-to-day situations, but also during and after natural disasters and in situations of severe environmental degradation (Division for the Advancement of Women, 2001). However, women's contribution in terms of labour, skills and knowledge, and in the use and management of natural resources — including food, water and energy production — often goes unrecognized, unrecorded and undervalued.

13. Women's role in consumption has a major impact on development. In the choices that women make as

consumers they tend to consider the long-term, social and environmental implications, although this does not by definition mean that women will always make more sustainable choices.[8] While corporations and advertisement firms have clearly recognized women's role as consumers, it has yet to be recognized by institutions working towards sustainable development.

14. Since 1992, many studies have analysed the different roles and responsibilities of women and men in the use and management of natural resources. However, very few governmental institutions have integrated a gender dimension into their official environment and sustainable development policies. In cases where Governments have tried to incorporate gender, their efforts have often been ad hoc in character — for example, commissioning studies and development guidelines that are never used. Gender perspectives stand a greater chance of being integrated into individual field programmes.

15. There are indications, however, that change is on the way. A number of States have taken steps to incorporate a gender perspective in their national environmental activities and plans. In Colombia, the Ministry of Environment supports incorporating gender perspectives in the planning, management and evaluation of projects of the National Environment System. Côte d'Ivoire has developed a National Action Programme on the Environment (PNAE), which takes into consideration gender concerns, and Canada promoted the integration of gender in the texts of international sustainable development agreements.

16. Non-governmental organizations working on environment and sustainable development have tended to focus on gender for short periods of time without mainstreaming it in their overall work. Although no comparative research is available, women's organizations over the past decade appear to have paid much more attention to sustainable development. While mainstreaming sustainable development into women's organizations is usually a success, it is much more difficult to mainstream gender issues into sustainable development organizations.

B. Participation of women

> No government can claim to be democratic if half of its population is excluded from decision-making.
>
> — Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, New York, October 2000

17. Promoting women's leadership and widening women's role in decision-making are key strategies for sustainable development, since production and reproduction require the full participation and partnership of both women and men. Although a number of countries have reported progress on this front, the overall lack of gender-disaggregated data at all levels — international, national and local — does not allow for an adequate assessment of women's participation in sustainable development.

18. Women's networks were actively engaged in the 1990s cycle of United Nations conferences and summits and played an important part in monitoring the implementation of agreements, but women's participation has in many cases not been a priority. For example, the Commission on Sustainable Development stakeholder dialogues since 1998 have not included women as a distinct group. (This has changed only in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.) At the local level, women are not in control of, and rarely able to participate in, decision-making structures relating to, inter alia, water, agriculture and forest systems.

19. Despite this overall assessment, there are some positive examples of women's participation in decision-making for sustainable development. In China, women constituted 38 per cent of the staff in environmental protection departments in 1997. In Tunisia, women constitute 36 per cent of the total staff of the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development, with 19 per cent occupying senior management positions. In Canada, indigenous women have been fully active in the Government's efforts to meet commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity.[9]

20. Currently, women make up 14 per cent of Governments worldwide. Of the total of government ministers, they make up just over 14 per cent, although only 9.4 per cent are in the legal areas and less than 5 per cent are in economic, political and executive positions. There are only 22 women ministers of

environment worldwide. Women are also significantly underrepresented in corporate decision-making and in trade organizations such as the World Trade Organization where there were only 12 women among the 159 trade policy experts in 1999. More recently, there have been some positive actions such as the November 2001 appointment of the first two women ever elected by the United Nations General Assembly to serve on the 55-year-old International Law Commission.

21. Participation of women in the natural (and economic) sciences remains limited. In the Pacific islands, for example, there are no women heads of meteorological services, and most other related governmental agencies — water, agriculture, fisheries, disaster management, planning and health — are headed by men. In natural disasters managing councils in the Middle East, women's participation is practically non-existent, although the number of female professional engineers, medical doctors, and service providers as well as decision makers in different governmental and non-governmental organizations in that region has increased.

22. The participation of both women and men in sustainable development policy-making brings a higher quality to planning and an important sense of ownership to projects. Sixty per cent of cities worldwide involve civil society in formal participatory processes prior to the implementation of major public projects. Engendering Local Agendas 21 has been successful in many municipalities. WEDO and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) worked together to understand the specific roles that women play in Local Agendas 21 worldwide. Local Agenda 21 programming at municipal level represents a special opportunity to increase women's participation in sustainable development. However, few localities have made consistent efforts in this area, although WEDO/ICLEI surveys have shown that there is ample room for development of such an approach. In the 1996 survey of Local Agenda 21 projects in 2,500 municipalities, 53 per cent reported that women were included in decision-making processes.

23. The survey also found examples of cities that have proactive approaches to incorporating gender concerns. The Trinidad and Tobago Network of non-governmental organizations had developed a project called "Engendering Local Government" which trained more than 300 women in political skills, and local government representatives and administrators in gender analysis and planning. Some of these activities focused on environmental planning and concerns. The United Nations Environment and Development United Kingdom Committee (UNED-UK) has developed very useful tool kits to promote the full participation of women in sustainable development.

C. Women's access to and control of natural resources

24. Women's access to and control and management of natural resources are crucial aspects of sustainable development. Where they have access to land and resources, women play an important role in conservation. A study conducted by the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) showed that women living in the very fragile *charlands* (pieces of land resulting from the accretion of silt in river channels) of Bangladesh are very particular about preserving the natural vegetation, which they consider to be a valuable resource and necessary for the stability of the land. However their access to the abundant open-water fish resources, which represent a huge livelihood potential, is restricted, since fishing is considered a male occupation or the job of a low caste.

25. Women, however, are often not permitted to own land, and even in countries where women have ownership rights, huge inequities in access still exist. Case studies in the working paper "Rights of Women to the Natural Resources Land and Water", of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1997), highlight the importance of land and water rights, and how having these rights strengthens other rights.

26. The current magnitude of land degradation poses an added threat to the livelihoods and survival of many families. Prolonged dry seasons aggravated by climate change, and clear-cutting due to agriculture development and urban settlements, create a great loss of forest and the natural green cover on which women and their families depend. Man-made small-scale natural disasters, which are occurring at a more regular rate, have a major impact on people's lives in general, but particularly increase women's workload and responsibilities. The fact that more and more people are obliged to use land and other resources that are unsuitable or of poor quality, increases the rate of

environmental degradation and further damages livelihoods.

27. In the past decade, access to water and adequate sanitation has barely kept pace with population growth, even in urban areas where low water pressure is a regular phenomenon. The impact of increasingly scarce freshwater supplies has obliged women water carriers to travel longer distances — up to eight hours per day — and spend many hours waiting to fill their pails. In many cases, girl children have to assist their mothers in fulfilling these and other related tasks, such as the necessary environmental control measures needed to deal with water-borne diseases.

28. UNEP estimates that 1.7 billion people lack access to safe water and expects this number to reach 2.3 billion by 2025 if present trends continue.[10] Polluted water is one of the most common causes of disease and death worldwide. Women are the hardest hit by limited quantities of freshwater and by poor quality water. In Latin America, women have kidnapped water officials to force authorities to provide sufficient water for the needs of their families.

29. Current processes, such as privatization of land and other resources, population pressure and the dissolution of customary land tenure, are undermining women's ability to use and conserve scarce land and water resources. Land is moved away from food production and into corporate control for large-scale industrial monocultures, tourism and shrimp cultivation. This has further marginalized and impoverished women and men farmers, and intensified food insecurity.

30. The transformation of agriculture to meet the needs of a globalized market economy is also contributing to the gradual erosion of women's biological resources and knowledge systems. Trade liberalization in agriculture and privatization of water bodies and forest resources have weakened the ability of small farmers to compete in the world market and to access critical resources such as water, fuel and fodder. Privatization also means that people have to pay high prices for the formerly free resources on which they depend. Women's access to seeds and other living resources is threatened both by patenting of life forms and by their own lack of knowledge about their intellectual property rights.

D. Women's poverty, education and work

31. Poverty eradication is both a complex and a multidimensional issue, and fundamental to promoting equality between men and women. That women still constitute 70 per cent of the 1.5 billion absolute poor, living on one dollar a day or less, results in their limited access to public services and limited access to/control over public resources, including adequate shelter.

32. In Africa, poverty levels now stand at an average of 41 per cent and as high as 51 per cent in sub-Saharan countries; between 1987 and 1998, the number of poor in South Asia increased by 10 per cent.[11] In Central and Eastern European countries, the collapse of socialist economies has contributed to the sharp rise of poverty and an increasing gap between rich and poor. China reported that the poverty-stricken population had dropped from 65 million in 1995 to 42 million in 1998, with the decrease in the number of poor women accounting for almost 60 per cent of that reduction.[12] Poor women are found disproportionately as heads of single-parent families (female-headed households) and among people of pensionable age.[13] In Canada, the poverty rates for female-headed households rose from 57.2 per cent in 1995 to 61.4 per cent in 1998, with declining employment a key factor.

33. More than 1 billion of the world's urban residents live in inadequate housing, in sprawling slums and squatter settlements in developing countries. In cities in developed countries, more than 16 per cent of all households live in poverty, while in developing countries more than 36 per cent of all households and 41 per cent of all women-headed households have an income below the locally defined poverty lines. In the North, there is a growing divide between the rich and the poor that has a distinct gender perspective — approximately 15.4 per cent of women compared with 12 per cent of men are living below the poverty line in the United States of America and 12.8 per cent of women compared with 10.6 per cent of men in Italy. The higher levels of poverty among women, despite their significant contribution to the economy, are linked to the fact that they are viewed as marginal workers and consumers, rather than as producers or managers.

34. The gender effects of economic globalization have varied among countries according to socio-economic structure and extent of integration into the world economy. These have resulted in falling fertility

rates, the rising educational attainment of women, increasing urbanization and changing family structures. Privatization, one of the engines driving economic globalization, has intensified existing gender-, class- and race-based inequalities to which poor women are subjected. Globalization increases women's multiple responsibilities in paid and unpaid work. Intergovernmental organizations have failed to formulate and evaluate trade policies from a gender perspective, thereby exacerbating women's economic inequity.

35. Generally speaking, women's employment has increased during the last two decades around the world. However, huge differences persist with respect to the quality, conditions and pay of female and male work. Governments have generally failed to integrate women's unpaid work in national accounting systems.

36. Education is an important strategy for poverty eradication. High rates of illiteracy clearly affect women's economic opportunities and civil engagement. Women constitute 65 per cent of those without basic reading skills worldwide. There are 900 million illiterates in the world and 130 million children unable to attend primary school. Illiteracy has been declining but the rates remain high in Africa, and in some parts of the world, such as South Asia, illiteracy is reportedly increasing among women. Education also has an important effect on population trends: a woman with at least seven years of education has 2.2 fewer children than a woman with no schooling. In some regions in the world, such as the Middle East, women are participating in planning, implementation and evaluation of different education projects. As a result, their knowledge of sustainable lifestyles is increasing.

E. Women's health and security

37. Women increasingly want to be involved in identifying, characterizing and solving problems impacting their lives. However, women have different and unequal opportunities for the protection, promotion and maintenance of their health. These include unequal access to basic health services, disproportionate responsibilities in the family and society, discrimination and experiences of violence and unsafe pregnancies. Women weakened by environment-related health problems are more vulnerable in pregnancy and childbirth. They are particularly vulnerable, especially in female-headed households, to environmental pollution and high prices for energy, food, and water, owing to their reproductive roles and household responsibilities.

38. Although gender differences in susceptibility to the risks of various toxic substances are still poorly understood, it is clear that these differences exist and are a particular threat to women's health. This is especially so in urban and low-income areas, which are more likely to have a high concentration of polluting industrial facilities or agricultural industries. With respect to agrochemicals, farmers seldom receive adequate information regarding occupational health and safety or the proper management of these chemicals.

39. A variety of chemicals are associated with cancer in women, pregnancy failures and childhood developmental difficulties. Cancers of the reproductive system affect growing numbers of women. Poverty and accompanying malnutrition are also associated with reproductive health problems. There has been special concern about the effects of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and endocrine disrupters on human reproduction, and development.[14]

40. In the past decade, women worldwide have organized to advance their reproductive rights. They have shown that proper prenatal and obstetric care, safe and reliable contraception, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) prevention and care, and other aspects of health for women are inseparable from such basic amenities as reliable transportation, hygienic conditions and clean water. While these provisions are required for women's health and rights, and for stabilizing rapid population growth, the world recognizes that many other factors contribute to decisions about childbearing.

41. Recent examples of organizing by women to change government policy include the WEDO public hearings for the Action for Cancer Prevention Campaign, which gave women an opportunity to tell their stories about environmental health hazards in their communities, while laying out concrete proposals for policy changes to respond to rising cancer rates. In Argentina, the Biological Conservation Regional Economy Pilot project involved participation and input of local women in data collection related to pesticide use in tobacco production, and related birth defects and cancers; and in 1998 in Malaysia, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN-AP) and the Farm

Worker Women's Leadership Network compiled information and personal stories to document pesticide-related health problems faced by women workers.

F. Women's organization and empowerment for sustainable development

42. Worldwide, women have organized and launched countless initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development. This paper allows for mention of only a few. In the document entitled "Women Transform the Mainstream",[15] eighteen case studies show women activists challenging industry, demanding clean water and calling for gender equality in sustainable development. Many more examples exist on women's role in forest conservation, river management, land recovery, waste control, awareness-raising and local planning, in countries ranging from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Uzbekistan and Uganda.

43. These cases demonstrate that not only is it necessary for women to organize but they must be empowered to do so. For example, in Guatemala, activities in a forest conservation project organized by the Foundation for Eco-development and Conservation (FUNDAECO)[16] were designed to solicit greater input from women. Early activities engaged women in drawing community resource maps, and as the community became comfortable with the process, more formal tools were used, such as community evaluation cards, to identify the most critical areas of concern to women about the environment.

44. Governments have reported on a range of activities from awareness-building to training programmes and seminars for women in natural resource management and environmental protection. Numerous reports show training as the strategy of choice for increasing women's capabilities in sustainable development. For example, the Islamic Republic of Iran organized workshops on women's participation in environmental protection in order to increase the proportion of women engaged in preserving natural resources. The Government of Jamaica, with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), launched a "Trees for Tomorrow" project involving women in agroforestry extension activities; and Germany initiated a project called "Girls for an Ecological Europe", which motivates and supports girls who want to become active in the field of ecology. Costa Rica created an "International Eco-Peace Village" to train women and youth about ecological issues and sustainable development; and the Congo, Malaysia, Mali and the Republic of Moldova embarked on environmental awareness training programmes for women.

45. In several regions prone to conflicts or natural disasters, women have been empowered through the creation of a Women's Neighbourhood Team. These teams have strengthened women's capacity and also proved to be a strong tool in combating domestic violence. Elsewhere, women have been active in peace-building, for example, through the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace, Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe in Rwanda, the Soldiers' Mothers Committee in the Russian Federation, Saturday Women of Istanbul in Turkey, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and the National Union of Guatemalan Women.

G. Women's rights

46. The basic principle of human rights affirms the dignity of every individual. Rights also empower people in the fight against poverty and for sustainable development. There is a growing recognition that protecting and promoting women's and girls' human rights not only improve their political, social and health status, but also contribute to the well-being of family, community and society.

47. However, lack of equal property rights is still a major cause of the feminization of poverty. Women own less than 1 per cent of the world's land property. Land title deeds are the main form of security used to secure loans and credit. Security of tenure is among the most important of all housing rights. The growing awareness of the relationships between human rights and sustainable development has led to a decline in human rights abuses in settlements, such as mass forced evictions. In 1996, the Government of Tunisia introduced new legislation expanding women's rights with respect to accessing housing credit.

48. At the same time, women's rights to liberty, security of person and development are unattainable without comprehensive, accessible and affordable sexual and reproductive health services and the freedom to make decisions about sexuality and fertility.

It has been recognized that human rights as well as needs, both individual and social, and specifically those of women and girls, must be at the centre of population and development policies. The human rights approach adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development and reaffirmed since then should be a guarantee that these rights and needs remain central to the way reproductive health policies, services and programmes are developed and delivered.

49. Increasingly, there is a need for clarification in respect of the Convention on Biological Diversity and conflicting international law regarding the appropriation of women's knowledge of, and control over, genetic resources. The recent interest in indigenous knowledge coincides with the growth of the biotechnology industry and a rush to develop and enforce intellectual property rights laws under the auspices of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights[17] and other trade policy negotiations. Such regimes further undermine women's autonomy and their access to, and control over, vital resources. The Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and other intellectual property rights regimes provide no safeguard against the pirating of genetic material from indigenous and traditional societies.

50. The consequences of conflicts are enormous — for communities, the environment and society at large, especially women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Civilian victims, mostly women and children, often outnumber casualties among combatants. During the last century, the burden of armed conflict on civilian populations has increased substantially. (Civilians accounted for 5 per cent of First World War casualties, 52 per cent of Second World War casualties and approximately 90 per cent of casualties in conflicts during 1991 alone.) The after-war consequences for communities are also grave. For example, there are more than 100 million anti-personnel landmines scattered in 64 countries in the world.

51. Among the increasing numbers of refugees and involuntarily displaced persons, the majority are women, adolescent girls and children. As a result of conflicts, women often become the sole managers of households, sole parents, and caretakers for elderly or injured combatants. In the midst of conflict and collapse, the role of women in preserving social order is crucial. Notwithstanding their roles and tasks, women's priorities in countries suffering from armed violence continue to be largely marginalized. In general, violence against women in all its forms is still pervasive and underreported.

52. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[18] the most comprehensive women's human rights instrument in international law, binds countries to advance women's social, economic and political rights. Thus, it should be further developed as a mechanism to protect women's rights, including equal participation in decision-making. The monitoring mechanisms of the Convention, both the regular reporting process and the Optional Protocol thereto,[19] are important for advancing women's rights in sustainable development.

H. Information and knowledge

53. Women are producers as well as users of information. Women's indigenous knowledge and practice of environmental management increase the coping capacity of communities in environmentally fragile and hazardous areas and thus contribute to their survival. They have an inherent technological capacity: using technical skills and knowledge in their daily activities. Women's scientific knowledge, innovations and adaptations are demonstrated in many areas. Case studies have illustrated that women quickly adapt techniques, skills, organization, management and behaviour to minimize the effects of hazardous circumstances, and that they often are not confined to a single technical area or sphere of knowledge. However, the recognition and integration of this knowledge are still rare.

54. Unequal access to technologies in different geographical regions and social groups contributes to the widening of the gap between the haves and the have-nots, reinforcing the existing marginalization in development and technical resources. Women, particularly those from less developed regions and from marginalized groups, tend to be underrepresented in terms of access to these technologies. For example, the global Internet gender ratio has remained static at 63 per cent male and 37 per cent female.

55. There continues to be a general lack of gender-specific data and benchmarks to evaluate women's situation at the local and global levels and shed light on their specific concerns. Effective gender analysis does

more than assure women's participation in sustainable development; it also provides information on how resources are allocated to women *and* men, highlights constraints imposed by women's socially constructed and confined roles, and proposes women-empowering policies. There is an urgent need to engender existing environmental tools, such as the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

56. The body of knowledge on gender, environment and sustainable development is still developing, and systematic analysis and knowledge about area-specific factors are rare. There is a lack of good case studies on gender roles in sustainable development, although many interesting examples exist. Several show processes of women's empowerment by information exchange, for example, use of a scorecard to track and display implementation of governmental commitments at United Nations conferences. Important efforts have also been made to allow women to utilize the Commission on Sustainable Development as a mechanism for women's communication with governmental policy makers, including the organization of dialogue sessions with delegates around gender concerns and the publication of alternative reports organized by non-governmental organizations.

57. Women's groups have been producing information as a way of keeping their Governments accountable and challenging the status quo. In Brazil, women's non-governmental organizations have used radio to disseminate gender-sensitive information and increase women's participation; and in Egypt, women working in television have conducted gender analysis of programming. Women at the grass-roots level have disseminated information widely using adaptations of the WEDO Community Report Card.

58. The development of indicators for sustainable development should include participatory dynamic and interactive processes, involving full participation of community members. There have been some innovative initiatives in that area, such as that of the Crossroads Resource Center, United States. The organization developed an approach using lay people to develop indicators for sustainable development; public round tables were held, and long-term thinking was encouraged. The current Commission on Sustainable Development indicators for sustainable development include only one gender-related indicator (ratio of female wage to male wage). In the original list however, there were some more useful gender-disaggregated indicators, which have also been developed by other development partners, such as those used in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report*. See also the biennial report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) entitled *Progress of the World's Women, 2000*; and the WEDO primer entitled "Women and Sustainable Development: A Local Agenda".

I. Institutional aspects

59. In the area of sustainable development, commitments towards a gender approach have been limited, and there is a general lack of institutional gender capacity and national machinery. Some organizations — for example, the Netherlands Committee for IUCN (the World Conservation Union) — have introduced gender training for staff. In the multi-stakeholder dialogues in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development requires gender equality among delegations; but even so, men still far outnumber women. Such initiatives are too often ad hoc in character and therefore less likely to achieve gender balance.

60. Particularly at the local level, in some countries real efforts were made to engender sustainable development. In the Philippines, along with adopting in 1989 the Plan for Sustainable Development, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources created a Technical Working Committee on Women to respond to the needs of women. This resulted in the integration of gender in the review and modification of environmental laws. In 1999, a detailed framework for integrating gender into a national conservation strategy included training and monitoring of key staff, the development of rapid appraisal techniques and guidelines for programme planning. A key aspect was regular consultations with women's groups. The Brazilian National Council for the Rights of Women started nationwide consultations, resulting in a national plan aimed at mainstreaming gender policies in the Government as a whole.

61. Although Agenda 21 mentioned that all United Nations agencies should promote international policies

and programmes that engender sustainable development, this has not been a priority for most.

J. Obstacles and challenges

62. Major obstacles for the implementation of chapter 24 of Agenda 21 and other gender-related commitments have been:

- Lack of recognition of the role that women play in sustainable development and lack of awareness about the benefit of gender equality considerations in sustainable development policies;
- Underrepresentation of women in decision-making and absence of strategies to ensure women's participation in formulating, planning, making decisions about and implementing sustainable development;
- Predominantly male leadership of environment and sustainable development-related organizations and institutions;
- Insufficient number of women in responsible positions and underrepresentation of women in research and teaching;
- Shortage of gender-sensitivity in policies and programmes;
- Lack of gender-specific information on sustainable development;
- Low level of education, management and technical skills among women;
- Lack of women's access to resources and insufficient financial and human resources.

63. It is important to:

- Ensure the full and equal participation of women in sustainable development decision-making, starting with the World Summit on Sustainable Development process itself;
- Design and support programmes that contribute to developing the capabilities of women and men to enable women to participate fully in sustainable development policy-making and implementation;
- Mainstream gender in all sustainable development policies and programmes, and make policy makers accountable for this;
- Develop and disseminate gender-specific data and information;
- Improve the position of women living in poverty.

III. Looking forward: women identify priorities

64. The present section outlines priorities for future action on sustainable development. These priorities will receive specific attention in the document entitled "Women as a Major Group", to be submitted to the Commission acting as the preparatory committee at its fourth session, and the Women's Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet, 2002-2015, which is being developed by a wide group of women's organizations and networks and will be available by the end of May 2002.

A. Globalization, governance and sustainable development

65. The root causes of the striving for dominance and privilege, disregard for the needs of others, unwillingness to change, and short-sightedness are barriers to good governance and sustainable development. Existing dominance structures, which so often form the negative sides of globalization, need to be overcome. Equal participation and partnerships of all citizens, interest groups, stakeholders, creeds, cities and nations are key to good governance and gender justice.

66. Mobilization of women in different areas of representation has substantially increased with the growth of the global women's movement. However, participation of women as a distinct stakeholder group needs to be ensured, with a goal of 50/50 representation, based on a critical analysis of the gender aspects of the issues.

67. The process of globalization has given greater impetus to women's participation in the market economy, a trend that should also be stimulated and expanded. However, working women, whether formally employed or self-employed, often end up with a multitude of tasks inside and outside the home, creating working time of more than 70 hours per week.

68. Gender mainstreaming policies and procedural rules as well as gender balance needs to be integrated

into the work of all government departments, international institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. In all policies and plans, effective gender analysis is a prerequisite.

B. Ensuring sustainable livelihoods: environmental and human security

69. Human security and the security of the planet are at stake. The events of 11 September 2001 in the United States illustrate world interconnectedness and the vulnerability of society as well as the destructive possibilities of technology. At the local level, securing access to and control of resources is a necessity. Human security should be a priority area for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

70. Peace-building and peace education should be recognized as major elements of sustainable development. Women want to be appropriately involved in decisions that affect them and represented in decision-making on issues related to conflict resolution, and peace- and nation-building.

71. Natural disasters that are often man-induced, such as floods, landslides and drought, pose another threat to people's lives and livelihoods. Therefore, there needs to be much more attention given to the gender aspects of natural disasters. Here a strong partnership between the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on the Status of Women is feasible.

72. Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations fail to give adequate attention to securing access to and control of good-quality resources, and related gender aspects, in policies, planning and programmes. Women's full participation in these areas at the community, professional and decision-making levels is a prerequisite of sustainable development. The United Nations Millennium Declaration[20] links gender equality to the eradication of poverty, with Governments resolving to promote gender equality and women's empowerment "to combat poverty, hunger and disease, and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable" (see para. 20 of the Millennium Declaration).

C. Sustainable production and consumption

73. Meeting the basic human needs of all the world's people is essential in order to achieve sustainable development. There is an urgent need to make production all over the world safer, cleaner and more effective, and socially accountable.

74. In general, consumers' awareness of the impacts of consumption patterns is limited, and even if people are aware of these impacts, they find it difficult to act without an enabling environment, established by government, in which producers' are held accountable for their advertising campaigns.

75. No new World Trade Organization round of multilateral trade negotiations[21] should be initiated without evaluating the impact of present trade agreements on developing countries' women and men and on the environment.

D. Human health and sustainable development

76. Women's and men's health differ in significant ways, including how they are exposed to diseases, how susceptible they are to diseases, how they are treated for diseases and what the outcomes of those diseases are. There is a marked lack of gender-focused health studies examining possible hazardous exposures. The gender-specific consequences of climate change on the health of women and children should receive special attention.

77. HIV/AIDS also affects sustainable development and the position of women. In many communities, the human capacity for development is threatened, children are orphaned and women are forced to assume an enormous caretaking role.

78. The principle of voluntary and informed choice in respect of the provision of sexual and reproductive health services should be recognized as a basic human right. The International Conference on Population and Development and the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the Conference[22] formed important frameworks for such an approach and need further implementation in the future.

E. Biodiversity and knowledge systems

79. The world's ecosystems and its biodiversity form the backbone of people's health, security and sustainable development. There is an urgent need to develop a global peoples' consensus to fully express the rights and responsibilities of all nations and peoples towards stewardship of the Earth's biological resources. The role of women in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources needs wide recognition, as does their knowledge of these resources.

80. The depletion of biodiversity and the pollution of its environment are a major concern of many women around the world. Genetic modification of live forms can also form a threat to original species and ecosystem health.

F. Education, information and communication

81. Education, formal and informal, is essential for sustainable development. Although enrolment in primary and secondary education has increased in almost all regions of the world, in some parts of the world access to basic education has stagnated, as Governments have reduced spending on social services. There is a challenge in respect of further closing the gender gap.

82. Analytical research, including case studies, should provide better insights into gender and sustainable development interlinkages. Gender-disaggregated data, both qualitative and quantitative, need to be made available.

Notes

[1] From statement by the Women's Caucus delivered at the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Regional Ministerial Meeting, for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Geneva on 24 September 2001.

[2] "There are slightly fewer women than men in the world — 99 women per 100 men" (chap. 1). The regions where men outnumber women are mostly situated in Asia and Northern Africa. "Of 22 countries or areas in the world where there are 95 or fewer women per 100 men, all but one are in Asia and Oceania. The deficit of women in Southern Asia may be in part the result of some forms of discrimination against women and girls." In all other regions of the world, women outnumber men. Of the world's 1 billion adults, two thirds are women (*The World's Women, 2000: Trends and Statistics*, Social Statistics and Indicators, No. 16 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.00.XVII.14)).

[3] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1.

[4] Ibid., annex II.

[5] While recognizing the impossibility of sustainable development without the full participation and empowerment of women, the International Conference on Population and Development shifted the debate on population from demographic concerns and targets towards the view that well-being of women and men was at the centre of sustainable development.

[6] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[7] The obstacles for implementation of the Platform for Action were identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly as follows: conflict and human displacement; economic change and instability; discrimination practices; attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes; absence of targets, data and monitoring mechanisms; and resources shortages.

[8] Based upon studies referred to in "Gender and sustainable consumption: bridging policy gaps in the context of chapter 4, Agenda 21", report of the United Nations Environment and Development United Kingdom Committee (UNED-UK) submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session, April 1999 (1999).

[9] See United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

[10] "World Day for Water", United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations University news release, 22 March 1999.

[11] World Bank, *World Development Report, 1999/2000: Entering the 21st Century* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000).

[12] Contribution of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

[13] Between 9 and 42 per cent of all households in all regions of the world are female-headed, for example.

42 per cent in Southern Africa, 36 per cent in the Caribbean and about 30 per cent in developed regions of the world (*The World's Women, 2000: Trends and Statistics*, chap. 2).

[14] Among the POPs are phalates, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxin and at least 84 pesticides.

[15] Background paper prepared by WEDO and submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session, New York, April 1998.

[16] The project title is Allies in Conservation Environmental Education with a Gender Perspective in the Tropical Rain Forest.

[17] See *Legal Instruments Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, done at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994* (GATT secretariat publication, Sales No. GATT/1994-7).

[18] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex. As of 1 April 2000, the Convention had been ratified by 165 States parties; as of April 2000, 34 States had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention (Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat).

[19] General Assembly resolution 54/4, annex.

[20] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[21] In the Caribbean, the World Trade Organization decision in the banana dispute hit women, who constitute 70 per cent of the workforce in banana production, especially hard. The Caribbean countries had previously benefited from a specific agreement with the European Union (through the so-called preferential and differential treatment agreement). Now they lost market shares and, subsequently, employment and income; the women lost the basis for existence (press release, KULU — Women in Development, Qatar, 13 November 2001).

[22] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.